

16. NOTES ON SOME AMPHIBIANS OF THE DARJEELING AREA, WEST BENGAL

(With four plates)

Between 1958 and 1959 a small collection of amphibians was made in and around Darjeeling, 7200 ft. (2200 m.), Darjeeling District, West Bengal. The number of species found is small and I am inclined to believe that elevations ranging from 0 to 5000 ft. (c. 1500 m.) are likely to be more productive for variety of species.

Tylototriton verrucosus Anderson : The Himalayan Newt (Plate I)

This is reported by Annandale to be abundant between 4500 ft. to 5000 ft. (c. 1400-1500 m.) in the Kurseong area. His statement that it is found in restricted areas is perhaps due to the fact that these secretive creatures are only seen during the breeding season in May when they congregate at pools to lay their eggs.

Specimens were collected from a perennial pool at an elevation of 6500 ft. (c. 2000 m.) at Sonada in May. I was reliably informed that newts have been observed breeding in this pool for several years and it appears to be one of the regular breeding sites. It may be noted here that Annandale observed them breeding in temporary rain-water pools at Kurseong. The newts were usually seen resting in water at the edge of the pool. Occasionally a newt would come up from the depths of the pool to capture tadpoles of the toad (*Bufo himalayanus*) swimming at the top. In captivity they stayed out of water, and remained motionless for considerable periods, becoming active only when earthworms, which they took readily, were put into the container. They were uniform brown in colour with the tail edge orange. They cast their skins approximately every fortnight. In amplexus the male approaches the female from below and holds her by hooking his forelegs over hers.

Tadpoles of the Himalayan Newt, which stay at the bottom were also collected from the same pool. They were olive-brown in colour, profusely speckled with darker markings. All the tadpoles collected were in the four-legged stage, and three of them metamorphosed in captivity. The change-over to the adult form is completed in two days during which the animal does not feed. Eight tadpoles varied in size from 39 mm. to 57 mm. agreeing with those described by Smith (*Rec. Ind. Mus.* 26 : 309). The juvenile newts measured 50, 48, and 55 mm.

TYLOTOTRITON VERRUCOSUS ANDERSON



Adult



Tadpoles

(Photos : Durga Das)



Megophrys major Boulenger



Megophrys parva Boulenger

(Photos : Durga Das)